



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

AGENDA DATE: June 20, 2006

TO: Mayor and Councilmembers

FROM: Creeks Division, Parks and Recreation Department

SUBJECT: Community Guide To Santa Barbara's Watersheds

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council hear a presentation on the findings of the draft Watersheds Existing Conditions Study and the Community Guide to Santa Barbara's Watersheds.

DISCUSSION:

Background

In fall 2003, the Creeks Division and the Watershed Planning Subcommittee of the Creeks Advisory Committee (CAC) began outlining potential approaches for developing a watershed planning program. After evaluating other community watershed planning processes, the Creeks Division and the CAC Watershed Planning Subcommittee developed a three-part work program. The 3 phases include: 1) Prepare Baseline Existing Conditions and Constraints Studies, 2) Conduct Community Input and Engagement, and 3) Develop Watershed Action Plans.

The purpose of a watershed planning effort is to establish a comprehensive long-range strategy for identifying and integrating programs to achieve flood management and protection, storm water and urban runoff pollution reduction, natural habitat protection and enhancement, and passive recreation and open space opportunities. Watershed plans can also provide direction for long-range program and project priorities of the Creeks Division and city-wide efforts to improve creek and ocean water quality, and protect and enhance creek resources.

Phase 1: Baseline Existing Conditions

The City initiated the first phase of the program in October 2004 when Council authorized contracts with Questa Engineering Corporation (Questa) and Moore, Iacofano, and Goltsman, Inc. (MIG). Questa was responsible for preparing a comprehensive existing

REVIEWED BY: _____ Finance _____ Attorney

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conditions and constraints study of the Arroyo Burro, Mission, Sycamore, and Laguna watersheds. MIG was responsible for facilitating community outreach and participation, including workshops and the preparation of community watershed guides.

The community forums were held in October 2004 and November 2004, and the workshop proceedings were completed in early 2005. The purpose of the forums was to identify the watershed health concerns and priorities of Santa Barbara residents to help focus the preparation of the watershed existing conditions studies. The forums were also used to determine the interest of residents in additional follow-up activities such as technical workshops, creek clean-ups, and educational programs. Questa completed the draft existing conditions study in August 2005, and MIG began developing the community watershed guide in October 2005.

The draft *Existing Conditions Study of the Arroyo Burro, Mission, Sycamore, and Laguna Creek Watersheds*, prepared by Questa, provides a comprehensive assessment of policies and programs, and land use, cultural resources, geology, geomorphology, groundwater, water quality, and biological conditions throughout the city and specific to each watershed. The study also identifies information gaps and preliminary recommendations for creek management and riparian restoration and enhancement. Information gaps are related to hydrologic models, stream geomorphology and bank stability, and shallow groundwater, among others. The study text is supplemented with over 70 GIS-based maps that illustrate watershed conditions. The Executive Summary of the draft report is attached. A copy of the draft report was provided to the City Council Office and is on file at the Creeks Division Office, 620 Laguna Street. The report is also online at the Creeks Division webpage on the City's website: www.santabarbaraca.gov.

Next Steps

On June 5, 2006, the City began distribution of the "Santa Barbara Living Watersheds and Ocean" to all Santa Barbara households. A community forum to present the results of the technical studies and the guide is scheduled for June 20, 2006, at the Cabrillo Arts Pavilion at 7:00 p.m.

In addition to the community forum on June 20, 2006, the Creeks Division will be planning both community workshops and technical workshops for fall 2006. The community workshops will focus on the development of watershed action plans and the technical workshops will address watershed management issues, such as creek bank stabilization, riparian landscaping, and reducing impermeable surfaces. The results of these workshops as well as additional technical studies will provide the foundation for the development of the watershed action plans.

The Creeks Division will also be working with Questa to finalize the report and identify opportunities to integrate its findings into city-sponsored project and program planning. In addition to other City Departments, the County of Santa Barbara and state and federal

resource agencies will play an important role in the next phase of developing the watershed action plans.

BUDGET/FINANCIAL INFORMATION:

The total cost to date for the contracts with Questa and MIG to complete the existing conditions study, conduct community outreach and develop the community watershed guide is \$183,240. The Creeks Division Capital Program budget for the planning process is \$450,000. There is \$266,760 remaining to complete the watershed action plans. Once the priorities are selected, further studies will be needed to develop more specific creek and watershed improvements. The Creeks Division will work with City Departments and local, state, and federal public agencies, as well as community members and the Creeks Advisory Committee, to develop the work program prior to returning to Council.

ATTACHMENT: Executive Summary, *Existing Conditions Study of the Arroyo Burro, Mission, Sycamore and Laguna Creek Watersheds*, August 2005.

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SUBMITTED BY: Nancy L. Rapp, Parks and Recreation Director

APPROVED BY: City Administrator's Office